

ADWEEK

AdFreak

The Only Thing Worse Than Your Relatives? Your Relatives' Pets, Says HotelTonight

'Visit family. Stay with us' campaign continues

By T.L. Stanley | December 5, 2017



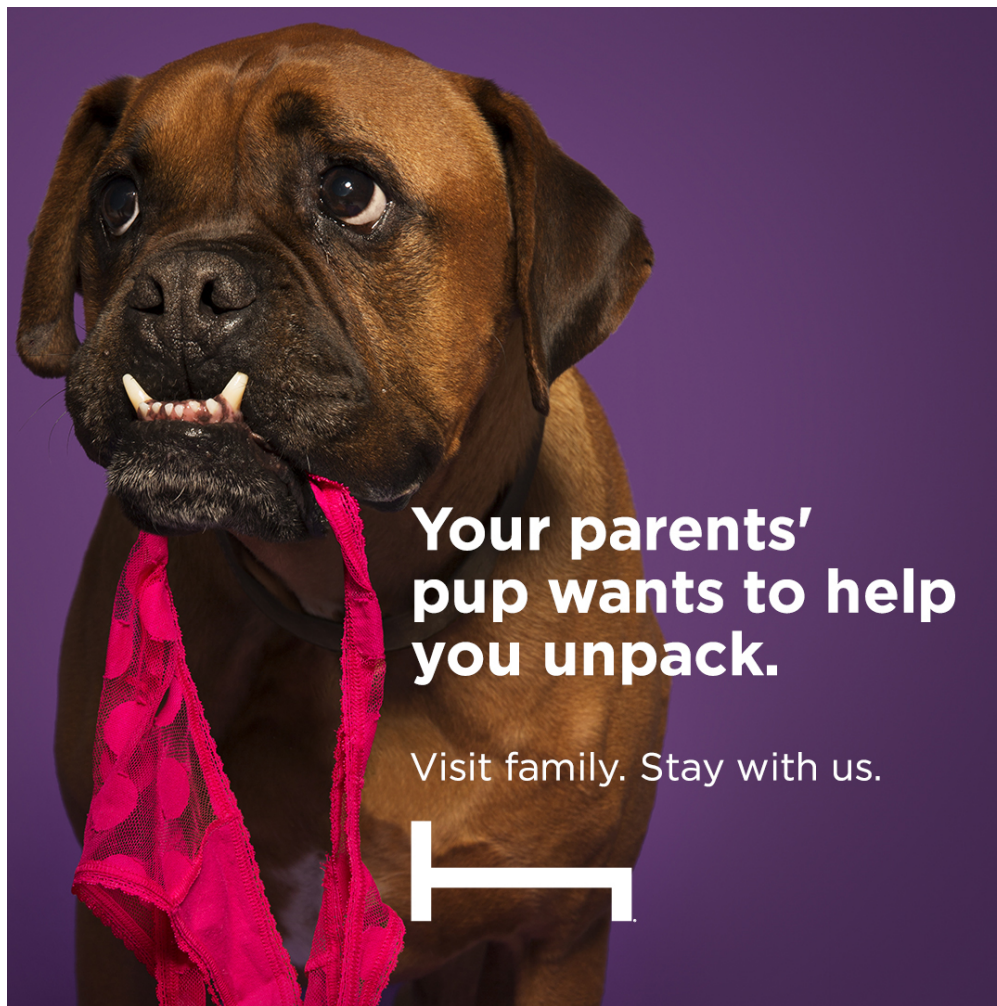
Far be it from HotelTonight to suggest you skip out on family face time this holiday. But the booking app feels your pain when Grandma's beloved pooch won't stop humping your leg, or when cousin Eunice's senile cat leaves you a "gift" on the pull-out bed.

Perhaps it's time to find a room of your own?

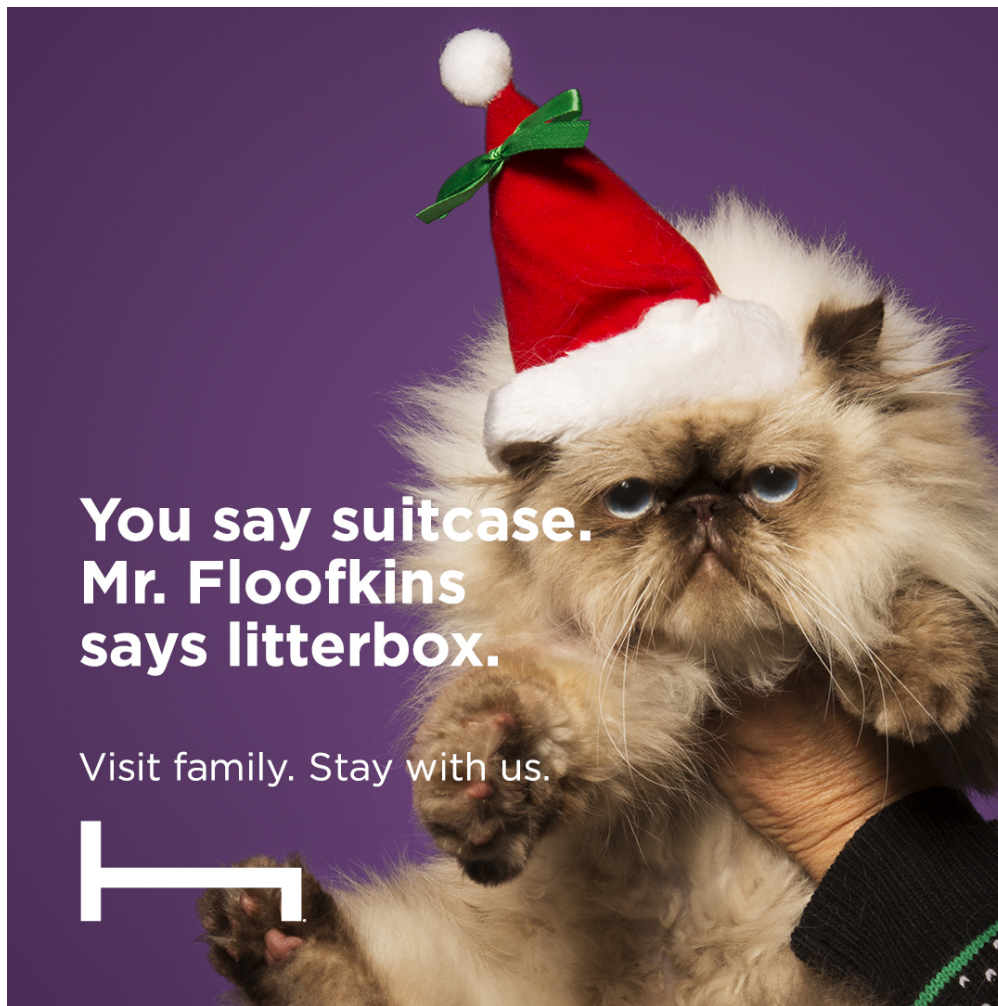
HotelTonight, a 7-year-old service, launches animal-centric ads this week as a follow-up to last December's cast of wacky relatives <https://www.adweek.com/creativity/bit-too-much-family-holidays-hoteltonight-has-wicked-solution-174766/>, whom you probably didn't want to share living space with. If those folks were quirky (and they most certainly were), wait until you get a load of their furry friends.

The digital and mobile ads, which will run in a mix of paid and organic placements on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, dating apps and elsewhere, zero in on one uncontrollable pet at a time, like a

wild-eyed King Charles Spaniel with the caption: “Auntie’s little Murphy likes to watch,” followed by the brand’s now-familiar tagline, “Visit family. Stay with us.”



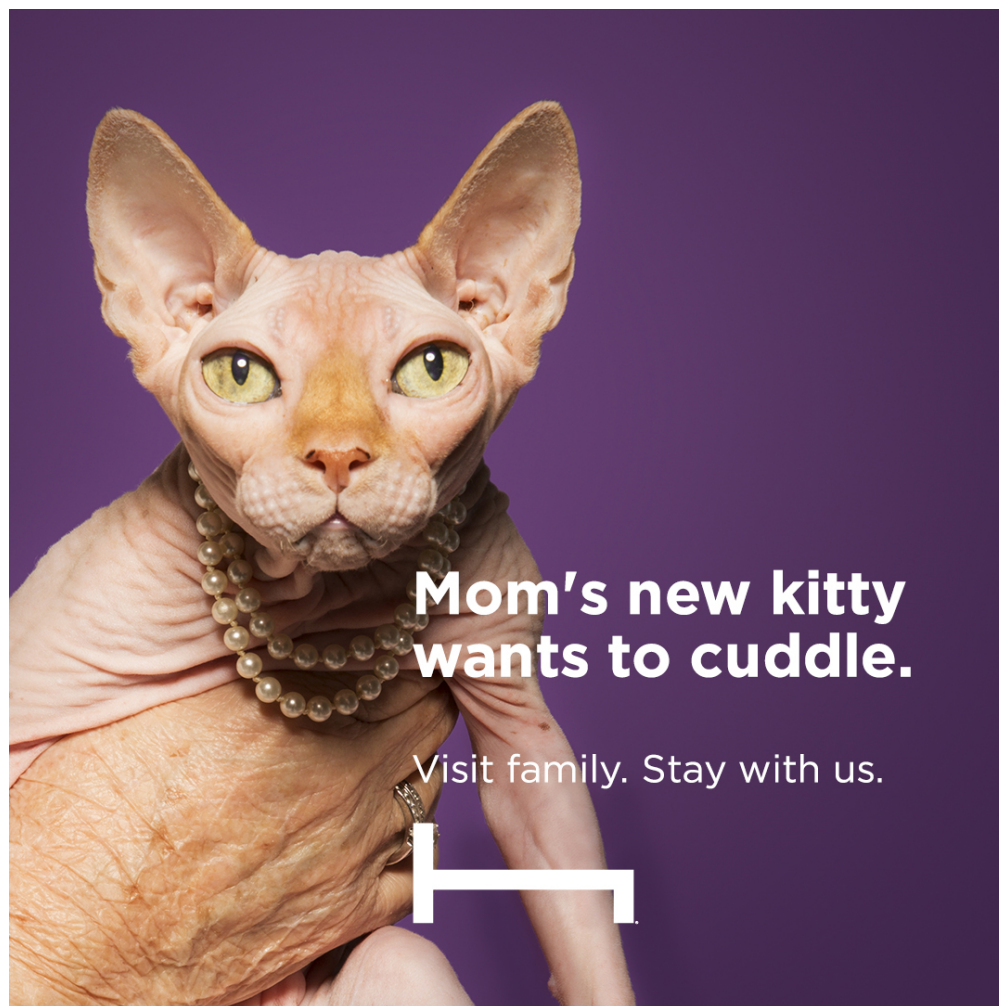




**You say suitcase.
Mr. Floofkins
says litterbox.**

Visit family. Stay with us.





HotelTonight remains gung-ho on family bonding, said the brand's creative director, Jordan Braun, while admitting that "the holidays are trying" and the upstart company "wants to continue to own that moment and speak in a different tone than our larger competitors."

Walking a fine line between edgy and "cooler than thou," the marketer is targeting people who'd actually like to enjoy their upcoming vacations with a little space and quiet (and maybe even a hot tub) instead of dealing with a surly Persian (headline: "You say suitcase. Mr. Floofkins says litterbox").

The San Francisco-based startup, partnering with agency Odysseus Arms, scored with its 2016 holiday campaign, boosting brand awareness by double digits. Recently forming its own internal creative team to work with the agency, the company wanted to continue its irreverent approach, purposely swimming against the tide.

"It's a ruthless onslaught of red and green, and elves and reindeer, and forced sentimentality," Braun said of traditional Christmas advertising. "This is a fresh cast of characters that acknowledges the ridiculousness of the holidays."

The ads were shot in Los Angeles in a single day that was filled with professional pets, their handlers, stylists, maintenance workers (for any on-set accidents, though everyone was reportedly well behaved) and various hangers on, Braun said.

The stars included an 80-pound Boxer named Sarge, two Fennec foxes, a Sphynx in costume jewelry and a grandmotherly hand model to hold the pets for photos.

Still to come: looping GIFs, with Braun and his team poised to take advantage of the Internet popularity of adorable animals.

The pet images are part of a larger HotelTonight campaign that includes mock-ups of cross-stitched pieces of artwork, but instead of heartwarming cliches like “Home sweet home,” they say “Bless these thin walls” and “Home is where the heart is. Hotel is where the in-laws aren’t.”











Another phase of the marketing riffs on stock photography, used in many travel campaigns, with captions on Instagram like, “You’re a lot prettier than the girl he brought last year.”

The marketer’s goal is to be “witty, confident, savvy and inclusive,” Braun said, without “watering everything down to appeal to everyone.” Because it’s a mobile-first player in a well-established category, “there’s a higher bar for our content and it needs to provide entertainment value,” he said.

HotelTonight, founded as a last-minute booking app, has redesigned its user experience and lengthened its reservation window in many cities to 100 days. The app counts about 25 million downloads.

CREDITS

HotelTonight, Internal Creative Team:

Jordan Braun – Creative Director

Janet Gardner – Head of Editorial

Jessica Lin – Designer

Odysseus Arms, Agency Team:

Jarrold Gustin – Art Director

Madeline Lambie – Copywriter

Photographer – Elizabeth Renstrom



T.L. Stanley

[@TLStanleyLA](#)

T.L. Stanley is a senior editor at Adweek, where she specializes in consumer trends and pop culture, brands and creativity.